In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows.

1.-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) A method for separating electronic components joined by a row-by-row array of solder interconnections comprising the steps of:

supplying an electronic component assembly having at least two components joined by a plurality of solder interconnections in a row-by-row array and having a first thickness;

providing a water jet cutting element having a thickness less than the first thickness of the solder interconnections and which element has a front edge which extends across a row of solder interconnections and which has a plurality of water jet openings spaced along the front edge of the element;

positioning the water jet cutting element adjacent one of the rows of the solder interconnections;

applying a force to advance the water jet cutting element through the row of solder interconnections whereby ~~a~~-water jets from the openings in the water jet cutting element engages and simultaneously cuts through each solder interconnection in the row of solder interconnections and severs the row of solder interconnections;

continuing the above steps for the remaining rows of solder interconnections to cut and sever all the rows of solder interconnections; and

separating the two components.

17. (Currently amended) An apparatus for separating electronic components joined by a row-by-row array of solder interconnections comprising:

securing means to hold an electronic assembly having at least two components joined by a plurality of solder interconnections in a row-by-row array and having a first thickness;

a water jet cutting element having a thickness less than the thickness of the solder interconnections and which element has a front edge which extends across a row of solder interconnections and which has a plurality of water jet openings spaced along the front edge of the element;

positioning means to position the front edge of the water jet cutting element adjacent one of the rows of solder interconnections;

advancing means to force the water jet cutting element against the row of solder interconnections and through the solder interconnections whereby ~~a~~ water jets from the openings in the water jet cutting element simultaneously cuts and severs each solder interconnection in the row of solder interconnections; and

separating means to separate the two components when all the rows of solder interconnections have been cut and severed row-by-row by the water jet cutting element.

18. (Previously added) The method of claim 16 wherein the water jet has a fluid pressure of about 20,000-60,000 psi.

19. (Previously added) The method of claim 18 wherein the water jet has a thickness of about 0.002-0.040 inch.

20. (Previously added) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the water jet from the water jet cutting element has a pressure of about 20,000-60,000 psi.

21. (Previously added) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the water jet from the water jet cutting element has a thickness of about 0.002-0.040 inch.